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Prairie Renaissance Cultural Alliance Gallery features train photographs by railfan Mike Vandenberg '03

Summary: An open house reception will be held from 7 until 8:30 p.m. on Thursday, December 9, 2010.

(December 5, 2010)-The Prairie Renaissance Cultural Alliance Gallery is pleased to announce a new exhibit now on display, "The Adventures of a Railfan," by Morris resident Mike Vandenberg. An open house reception will be held from 7 until 8:30 p.m. on Thursday, December 9, 2010. The exhibit runs through December 18, 2010. The exhibit and the reception are free and open to all.

Trains have been a part of Vandenberg's life since he was a small child. One of his favorite memories is visiting his grandmother in Michigan and watching freight and Amtrak trains on a swing bridge. He had his own model train set, and his parents brought him to places like Bandana Square in St. Paul, where they visited the Twin Cities Model Railroad Association. When he started college in 1997, he found his new home of Morris the perfect place to watch trains.

"Then my dad gave me his 35 mm film camera, and I started photographing trains," remembers Vandenberg. "At first, I'd shoot a whole roll of 36, and I'd maybe get one good one. I use a digital camera now, but that experience got it all started."

When his hobby expanded to photography, Vandenberg discovered a whole new group of friends, fellow railfan photographers. While many are long distance friendships online, he's also found railfans nearby, and they share entire days together planning for shots and investigating routes and schedules.

"Chasing trains and taking pictures takes a lot of patience," shares Vandenberg. "We do a lot of 'scoping,' figuring out spots for shooting." Vandenberg's exhibit includes photographs of trains nearby and in various places around the country.

Vandenberg's photography has been published in Amtrak's American 2010-11 travel planner. His photographs have been used to illustrate projects as varied as a Minnesota state report and a children's book, *My Train Book*, a Smithsonian project published by Harper Collins.

Vandenberg, a native of Mound, serves as senior admissions counselor in the Office of Admissions at the University of Minnesota, Morris, from which he graduated in 2003.

To view the exhibit, visit the PRCA, located at 632 Atlantic Avenue in Morris, Tuesday Wednesday, and Friday from 11 a.m. until 5:30 p.m., Thursday from 11 a.m. until 7 p.m. through the holiday season, Saturday from 10 a.m. until 2 p.m., or by appointment.

The nonprofit PRCA's mission is to advocate, promote, and coordinate arts, heritage, and cultural activities in Stevens County and the surrounding area.

Through personal and academic discovery, the University of Minnesota, Morris provides opportunities for students to grow intellectually, engage in community, experience environmental stewardship and celebrate diversity. A renewable and sustainable educational experience, Morris prepares graduates for careers, for advanced degrees, for lifelong learning, for work world flexibility in the future, and for global citizenship. Learn more about Morris at morris.umn.edu or call 888-866-3382.